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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000973

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [YM](#)  
SUBJECT: AL-QA'IDA ESCAPE: UPDATE

REF: A. SANAA 272  
[1](#)B. SANAA 286  
[1](#)C. SANAA 347  
[1](#)D. SANAA 385

Classified By: DCM Nabeel Khoury for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) On April 2, the ROYG publicly announced the surrender of Arif Salih Ali Majalli, the sixth escapee to turn himself in following the February 3 prison break of 23 Al-Qai'da supporters (ref A). ROYG officials contend that the remaining 17 escapees have not left Yemen and are optimistic that more will soon be captured. The National Security Bureau (NSB) remains in charge of the manhunt and its investigation into official complicity in the break-out continues. While no official charges have been filed, several Political Security Organization (PSO) prison officials have been arrested for suspicion of facilitating the escape. Cooperation between Yemeni and USG officials continues, including coordinated marine patrols between Coalition forces, the Yemen Coast Guard, and the Yemeni Navy (ref D). End Summary.

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Six Escapees in Custody  
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[1](#)2. (S) On February 3, 23 al-Qa'ida affiliated prisoners escaped from a maximum security prison in Sanaa. Among the escapees were 13 individuals convicted of participating in the 2000 USS Cole and the 2002 M/V Limburg attacks, including one of the Cole attack ringleaders, Jamal Badawi. On April 2, the ROYG announced the surrender of Arif Salih Ali Majalli, who became the sixth escapee recaptured since the February escape. In actuality, Majalli turned himself in to security officials in early March.

[1](#)3. (S) The six escapees who have surrendered to authorities are:

- Fawzi Al-Wajih
- Arif Salih Ali Majalli
- Muhammad Abdallah Ahmad al-Daylami
- Ibrahim Muhammad al-Maqri
- Mansur Nasir Awadh al-Bayhani
- Zakariya Nasir Awadh al-Bayhani

[1](#)4. (S) All of the escapees surrendered on their own to security authorities following negotiations conducted through third-party interlocutors or were turned in by family members. It is unknown what conditions, if any, security officials agreed to in exchange for their surrender. Security officials have also been pressuring escapees' families and tribes, including jailing some family members

until the escapees surrender. While all of the escapees are considered dangerous al-Qa'ida operatives, most of the captured escapees were near the end of their sentences, with the exception of Wajih, who was serving a 15 year sentence for his role in the Limburg attack.

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Manhunt and Investigation Continue  
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¶5. (S) The NSB remains in-charge of efforts to apprehend the remaining 17 escapees. Immediately following the prison escape, President Saleh designated the NSB as the lead agency in the investigation (ref C), replacing the much larger and more experienced Political Security Organization (PSO), from whose prison the Al-Qa'ida supporters escaped. The two agencies are cooperating, however, and the NSB is utilizing the PSO's larger staff and greater regional presence. NSB Director Ali Al-Anesi told Ambassador that he believes the remaining escapees are still in Yemen and expects to apprehend them through tribal and familial ties.

¶6. (S) The NSB is also continuing its investigation into official complicity in the break-out. Several PSO prison officials have been arrested, including prison warden Salah al-Muradi, but no official charges have been filed. The investigation has so far revealed that incompetence and possible corruption of prison officials appear to have facilitated the escape. Other motives, however, are still being examined.

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Comment: Good Cooperation, but Long Road Ahead

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¶7. (S) While the restructuring of Yemen's security services continues to evolve, the elevation of the relatively inexperienced NSB has not so far had a detrimental effect on the overall security of the country. Overall cooperation and sharing of information with USG officials has been good since the break-out, including with NSB Deputy Director Ammar Saleh (President Saleh's nephew) who had demonstrated a reluctance to cooperate with USG officials in the past. Despite the ROYG's optimism, recapturing the remaining escapees remains a formidable task given the limited capacity of Yemen's security services, large ungoverned areas within the country and porous borders.  
Krajeski